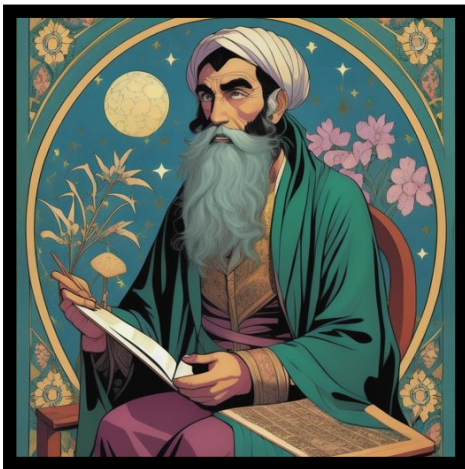


WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

What Is a Quatrain?

A quatrain is a poetic form consisting of four lines, typically with a rhyme scheme. It can be a standalone four-line poem or a **stanza** within a longer poem. Quatrains are common in many long ballads and are also found in Shakespearean sonnets.



Quatrains are a fundamental building block in the world of poetry. Their **concise** form allows for impactful and memorable expressions, making them a favorite among poets across different cultures and eras. Among the countless quatrains written, some have achieved legendary status, resonating deeply with readers and influencing literature and thought. One of the most celebrated examples comes from the works of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam, whose "Rubáiyát" has captivated audiences for centuries.

*A Book of Verses underneath the **Bough**,
 A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and **Thou**
 Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
 Oh, Wilderness were Paradise **enow!***

This famous poem by William Blake tells the sad life story of a chimney sweeper.

When my mother died I was very young,

*And my father sold me while yet my tongue
 Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"
 So your chimneys I sweep & in **soot** I sleep.*

One of Emily Dickinson's most famous poems, *Because I Could not Stop for Death* is an excellent quatrain example. It's a loose version of a ballad stanza, but Dickinson liked to break the rules a little by varying her meter within the stanza.

*Because I could not stop for Death –
 He kindly stopped for me –
 The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
 And Immortality.*

Some poems are made of a single, self-contained quatrain and not a series of stanzas. *First Fig* by Edna St. Vincent Millay is a famous example of this type of poem.

*My candle burns at both ends;
 It will not last the night;
 But ah, my **foes**, and oh, my friends—
 It gives a lovely light!*

This beloved poem by Robert Frost uses an ancient form of quatrain in its construction. The **rhyme** scheme is very distinct and creates a sing-song tone.

*Whose **woods** these are I think I know.
 His house is in the village though;
 He will not see me stopping here
 To watch his woods fill up with snow.*



by ECP coach
Jarrod Olman

Word list

- **Stanza:** A grouped set of lines in a poem, often separated by a space.
- **Concise:** Expressing much in few words; brief and clear.
- **Bough:** A large branch of a tree.
- **Thou:** An archaic or poetic form of "you," used in singular.
- **Enow:** An archaic form of "enough."
- **Soot:** A black powdery or flaky substance produced by the incomplete burning of organic matter.
- **Foes:** Enemies or adversaries.
- **Rhyme:** Correspondence of sounds between words or the endings of words, especially when used in poetry.
- **Woods:** A dense growth of trees and shrubs covering a relatively large area.

Let's chat about that!

1. What is your favorite poem and why does it resonate with you?
2. How do you think poetry can capture emotions differently from other forms of writing?
3. Do you prefer traditional forms of poetry like sonnets and haikus, or are you more drawn to free verse?
4. Which poet's work has had the most impact on you and your understanding of the world?
5. How do you think the role of poetry has changed in modern society compared to the past?

This short zen poem was written by Mizuta Masahide, a 17th century Japanese poet and samurai.

